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SECTION THREE

MYSTERIOUS FEATS OF INDIA'S FAKIRS

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

CAPTAIN SAM was a grizzled veteran of the service and one of the best story tellers that ever entertained a company of after dinner smokers. His uneasy bark had tossed all seas and he had made the best of his many visits to the world's strange lands. His account of the mystifying feats of the fakirs of India was the most complete I had ever heard, and his explanation of their baffling performances the most plausible. Said the captain:

"The first time I saw one of those brown fellows doing his tricks I'll tell you it opened my eyes as wide as saucers. We were laying in an East Indian port, several miles out, when he came swimming through the surf and scrambled up the ship's anchor chain as nimble as a monkey. He wore no clothing except a narrow cloth around his loins, and had nothing else upon him but a red cloth about a yard square. The first thing he did was to pick up from the deck a ball of twine which some sailors were using to repair a sail, and, you will doubtless not believe it, as he unwound the string from the ball it went straight up in the air instead of falling to the deck in accordance with the law of gravitation.

Paralyzed a Chicken.

"Going to nearby chicken coop he pulled forth a half grown fowl which naturally squawked for dear life when he put his hands upon it. Imagine our surprise, as he put it down upon the deck, to see it keel over on its side as if powerless to move. Once or twice it fluttered a little as the fakir looked away, but each time it soon ceased its struggles and lay as if dead. After a few moments had elapsed the performer turned his attention to something else, and the bird, released from the spell he held over it, arose to its feet and ran away with startled cries, evidencing alarm and astonishment at its strange experience. He then took from the hand of a sailor a half cocoanut and holding this aloft, caused twelve buckets of water to flow from it.

"Mind you, this fellow came over the rail of the ship dripping wet from his long swim through the surf. He could not have had a confederate or any means of assistance on board because we had just come to anchor after a voyage of several thousand miles. Everything he used in his first tricks belonged to the ship or the people on board. An audience of several hundred persons crowded close around him, and there was no possible chance for deception. The fakir next took a large earthen dish, poured into it a gallon of water, held it in his left hand, the other hand being lifted to his forehead. The vessel began to diminish in size and shrank until it entirely disappeared. Suddenly we saw a broken object no bigger than a grain of sand, which grew larger and larger until the dish reappeared and gradually assumed its original form, filled with water, which he spilled upon the deck.

The Mysterious Red Cloth.

"His last performance left us so amazed, that I for one, went into a splitting headache from thinking about it. He held up for inspection the red cloth which he brought with him. In order to keep it from getting wet as he swam out, he had it tied to the back of his neck in a tight little bundle. He passed it along and everybody examined it closely. There was evidently nothing unusual about it. It was just a plain piece of goods of coarse texture. After spreading it out flat upon the deck he walked around it several times, muttering to himself and turning his eyes upward. Something began to move beneath the cloth. It grew in size as we looked, and out hopped a monkey, chattering and grinning like a little savage. In another minute an ugly cobra poked its venomous head from under the edge of the cloth and wriggled out in plain view. I am deathly afraid of snakes, and despise the sight of monkeys, but to save my life I could not move out of my tracks. My feet were riveted to the deck as securely as if they had been spiked. A much larger object began to stir beneath the mysterious red cloth, and a girl about twelve or fourteen years old arose to her feet and stood smiling there among us. The looks of amazement on the faces of the people in that group is something I shall never forget. Before anyone could stir, the fakir clapped his hands, then his creatures vanished into air. Quickly folding up his cloth he leaped into the sea and swam away with the graceful, easy stroke of the strong swimmer. Many of us did not sleep that night for pondering over the mystery of his performance.

"A Hindu Wizard." "A Conjurer's Assistant." A Man of Mystery.

A Tree Grew in a Minute.

"But my astonishment was even greater when I afterward saw what is known as the mango and rope tricks. These are performed only by old men who belong to the higher order of conjurers. They do not take money for their exhibitions and only appear in public on some special occasion, such as the coronation of a prince or a festival of the church. I was present at one of these extraordinary public occasions when an elderly member of the caste appeared, and with many thousands of people about him, buried in the ground a mango. I occupied a vantage point and closely watched every movement for signs of collusion. This was impossible because the crowd approached to within a few feet of the fakir. Watching closely I began to see a shadowy something emerge from the ground, growing and spreading until it resolved itself into a mango tree fully fifty feet high, bearing leaves and fruit. I noted that it was perfectly rigid, not a leaf stirring in the breeze, and, furthermore, though the sun shone brightly, it cast no shadow. I changed my position and the vision became less distinct, but on going back to my former stand, I saw it plainly again. I was impressed with the peculiar expression in the eye and on the countenance of the conjurer. People of many races were present and from thousands of voices I heard expressions of amazement. I went forward and touched the leaves and trunk of the tree, and actually tasted the fruit from its branches. The wonderful part of this affair was that a couple of friends of mine who arrived some time after the performance had started, could see no tree at all, and they chafed me unmercifully for my credulity.

A Company of Indian Performers.

The Puzzling Rope Trick.

"The rope trick is the most complete and puzzling disappearing act. Once I saw an old man pause in the middle of his act, and announce that the rope had become tangled. He called to a boy and told the lad to climb up and straighten the tangle. The youngster caught the end of the rope and mounted upward until he was lost to view. Maybe you think it don't make you rub your eyes and wonder if you are in your right mind when you see someone climb right into the clouds. Well, the old man waited a little while, and then angrily called to the boy to come down. There was no response, and, apparently beside himself with rage, the wizard climbed the rope until he, too, was lost from view. Later the arms, legs, head and trunk of the boy fell among the horrified spectators, then the magician slid down the rope with his knife in his teeth. As he alighted the scattered members of the boy gathered themselves together and there stood the lad unhurt, ready to receive his master.

Mother Saw Her Baby Disappear.

"The rope trick, or disappearing act, is given some variation by different performers. Once when there was among my passengers an English lady and two little children, an old fakir with a young girl assistant came aboard. Everyone gathered around them and all were soon very much interested, especially the English lady who was peculiarly and painfully impressed with the expression of the old man's eye. With several others of the party she sat in a circle about him. After a few insignificant performances he and his assistant stood perfectly still, and the lady saw the girl begin to rise from the deck, and float across the space between her and a hammock in which her baby and little girl were resting. To her horror she saw the magician's girl stoop over and take up the baby. Holding the child, she rose from the deck, higher and higher, until she was lost in the clouds, the mother meanwhile being unable to cry out or move, as if she were in a sort of waking nightmare. Suddenly as she watched she saw a small spot in the clouds, and as it grew larger it took the form of her baby in the arms of the girl, who gradually descended to the deck and laid the child carefully beside its sister. Just then the mother had the power to break away from the circle, and, rushing to the side of the hammock, she eagerly snatched up her child, only to find it asleep and unhurt. 'How could you let that strange woman take your little brother away?' she screamed to her astonished little daughter. The child replied: 'Why, mamma, brother has been asleep here by me all the time; no one has touched him.' It was but an illusion.

Tricks Are Merely Illusions.

"There can be no doubt about these performances being illusions because an attempt to photograph any of them reveals nothing but an empty plate. These fakirs simply have the power to make you see things which do not exist. The first principle underlying the whole business is that a strong will subdues a weaker one, and therefore the first necessary condition of producing a magical effect is an increase in the power of thought. The Hindus, owing to that intense love for solitary meditation, which has been one of their most pronounced characteristics from time immemorial, have acquired mental faculties of which we of the western and younger civilization are totally ignorant. If outward organs can be developed by persistent effort, as the children of athletes and acrobats improve upon the prowess of their parents, in the same way mental powers may be developed and perfected. The Hindu has attained a past master's degree in speculative philosophy. He has retired for meditation and speculation for years to the silent places of his land, lived a hermit, subdued the body, and developed the mind, thus winning control over the weaker minds in consequence.

Hypnotism is the Only Answer.

"Hypnotism seems the only answer to the mystery. A man who can even hypnotize any part of his own body, cause his heart to stop visible pulsation, his skin to grow cold, his eye to become fixed, and his breath to depart, has an awful power. Many well authenticated accounts are given of voluntary interment, the most wonderful of which has become historic—that of the fakir at Lahore, who remained in the ground in a sealed coffin, to all appearances dead, for forty days.

"Kellar, the famous English magician, visited India many times in the hope of learning something about Indian magic, but at last he was forced to tell Queen Victoria when she inquired if he could imitate the Indian wizards, that he could only imitate them by means of appliances, wires and a dark room, and by these create an illusion, but that he was no nearer to knowing how these marvels were wrought than when he first endeavored to penetrate the mystery. Kellar dwells particularly upon the power of levitation, or annihilation of gravity, which these people seem to possess.

The Secrets of the East.

"To attribute the power of the Hindu conjurer to hypnotism does not detract from its marvelous character. If the brain of another can make me see and taste and hear things quite different from what they are, it only renders the phenomena all the more mysterious. Hindustan, that earliest cradle of our race, and of civilization, still holds the key to many mysteries. The Hindu preserves his secrets in the shade of his palm trees, in the jungles and wild recesses of the mountains, and behind the walls of his temples. He alone is master of arts which tax the ingenuity of our best reasoners, and will tax them for ages to come."

The Limit.

(Philadelphia Ledger.)

Hicks—They say a woman philosopher has come into considerable prominence in the west. Did you ver hear of a woman sage that amounted to anything?

Wicks—No, I never heard of a woman's age that amounted to more than 18 or 2.

AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN LABOR CONDITIONS COMPARED

BY JOHN MITCHELL IN COLLABORATION WITH WALTER E. WEYL.

Indianapolis, Sept. 20.

IT seems almost presumptious to make a comparison between American and European labor conditions after only a few months' stay in Europe. To carry out such a comparison thoroughly and completely would require many years of study devoted to this single subject. No one, however, who is interested in labor problems can travel through Europe without being struck by certain salient, important differences between American and European conditions.

One of the chief difficulties in the way of making this comparison lies in the fact that in each country of Europe conditions are different. There is a greater variation between the situation of the British miner and the miner of Silesia than between that of the British miner and the miner of the United States. One can speak only in general terms and can give expression only to those impressions which are the most obvious and striking.

Generally speaking, the material situation of the American workingman is far superior to that of his European brethren. Although wages, hours of labor, and general conditions of work are far from satisfactory in the United States, the situation of the American workinghan in these respects is better than that of the European workingman. Wages, measured both in money and in what money will buy, are higher in the United States than in England, and are much higher in the United States than in Germany, France or Belgoum. The working day appears to be slightly longer in the United States than in England, and somewhat shorter in the United States than in Germany, France or Belgium. The intensity of work is much greater in America than in any of the countries named. There is less idling, less dawdling, less "soldiering" and more precision and activity in the work of the average American than in that of the Englishman, Frenchman or German. The productivity of labor is also far greater in the United States. The average American worwman produces in a day much more than his European brother, and the higher wages which the American workman receives are, therefore, often compatible with a lower cost of production than is possible in Europe. This greater output of the American workingman is due to the fact that, owing to his better nourishment and better training, as well as to his better education, he is able to accomplish more and to work with greater muscular and nervous energy. Moreover, the higher wages of the American workingman constantly stimulate the employer to introduce labor-saving machinery and to effect economies which are not at the expense of the workman. In addition, the greater natural resources of the country and the larger and more efficient manner in which industry is organized in the United States permit the American employer to pay higher wages without entailing a greater cost, which fact should be borne in mind when estimating the advantages and disadvantages under which the American workingman labors.

In Europe, as in America, one constantly hears the statement that the dollar of the American workingman does not go further than the shilling of the Englishman, the mark of the German, or even the franc of the Frenchman or Belgian; in other words, that the cost of living is in proportion to the wages earned. Nothing could be further from the truth. The standard of living of the American workingman is far from what it should be in a country of our surpassing wealth and great natural resources, but it is higher than the standard of living in England, and much further advanced than on the continent. The European workingman spends less on living because he has less to spend, and he receives less of the decencies, comforts and luxuries of life than does the American workingman. He lives on less money, but he lives also on less food. He has fewer clothes and they are of poorer quality, and his lodgings, with some exceptions, are much worse. The chief article in the budget of the workingman—food—is on the whole not less expensive than in the United States, house rent—which is the second largest item—is not much less expensive, and in some cases is more costly, than would be similar accommodation in places of the same population in the United States. On the whole, the things which are cheap are those who do not enter largely into the consumption of the working classes or which do not have a great influence upon the purchasing power of wages.

Taking into consideration the whole of western Europe, it would seem that women work more, and, perhaps, at harder toil than in the United States. The conditions surrounding many women workers in our great American cities are so entirely bad that nothing in Europe could well be styled worse, but the proportion of women who are working, especially the proportion engaged in occupations requiring great muscular effort, seems to be larger in Europe—and especially on the continent—that in the United States. It is not many years since women were taken out of the mines in Europe, and as late as two years ago women were still employed inside the Belgian mines. Even at the present time there are tens of thousands of women engaged at the difficult and tedious work of picking slate above the surface of the English, Scotch, Welsh, Belgian, French and German mines. Women are very largely employed in agriculture, and in many towns are put at work cleaning the streets, or are engaged at other toilsome and wearying tasks. In many countries women still seem to be the cheapest and most serviceable beases of burden; in some they are employed at occupations from which, in America, they would be excluded by public opinion. The prevalence of barmaids in Great Britain may be taken as a case in point.

The spirit of unionism is stronger in the United States than in any country on the continent, but it is weaker here than in England. In the latter country labor organizations have existed for so many years that the principles of unionism have been transmitted from father to son, and the organizations can always count upon a loyalty and a love possible only after such a period of life. On the continent, the unions, while growing in strength, are neither so powerful nor so firmly knit as are the American unions. The repressive measures of the government, the constant clash of political and industrial ideals, and the newness of unionism itself, all have tended to retard the progress of the organizations.

On the continent, moreover, relations between employers and employed are not so favorable as in the United States. There are, perhaps, fewer strikes, and there may even be less direct friction, but in these countries the workingman, whether unionist or non-unionist, is not accorded the social position which he enjoys in America, and his organization is not, as a rule, recognized or dealt with. Even in England, the independence of the workingman appears to be very much less marked than in the United States, as one labor leader in England remarked, the Pullman porter in America is a free man, while the English waiter is a slave.

In no country—not even in England—do the working classes possess the same opportunities for voicing their ideas and ideals as in the United States. In our country most of the trade unons publish journals, supplemented by scores of other labor papers, while many of the great city dailies are distinctly friendly to the cause of unionism and devote many columns to labor news. In England, on the other hand, the larger newspapers devote scarcely any space to the doings of the workingmen or their representatives, and both in that country and on the continent there seems to be a dearth of intelligently directed appeals to the working classes.

In some respects, however, the condition of the working classes in Europe is very much superior to that of their brethren in America. Both in England, and to a still greater extent on the continent, regard is manifested for the safety of the workingmen and there is less of that reckless spirit in which the lives of thousands of American workmen are sacrificed to the profits of the employer. The number of accidents to employes upon American railways is very much greater—both absolutely and relatively—than in any country of Europe. The number of miners killed or permanently injured is far greater in the United States than in England or upon the continent, and in practically all other industries the death rate from accidents is less than in the United States. Moreover, in Europe the injured and disabled workmen and the widows of the workmen killed are not thrown aside to become a burden upon the community, but in all these countries provision is made by some system of insurance to guard them against unmerited misery. Also, in many countries provision is made for the insurance of the workingman against sickness, old age and invalidity. In most of the countries of continental Europe he can look forward to the payment of a definite pension in case of illness, or when, through age or weakness, he is unable to work longer. In Europe, as in America, however, there is practically no provision against unemployment, except in so far as this is furnished by the out-of-work benefits of trade unions. In this matter the old established British unions are far in advance of the American organizations, and more protection is afforded the English workman than is given the American laborer.

In many respects the European workingman is obliged to meet the same problems as are met by the American workingman, and to encounter the same difficulties. As in America, the workingman in Europe has been compelled to struggle for the limitation of the hours of labor of women and of children and for the prohibition of night work for women. He has also sought to obtain the passage of laws regulating th ehealth of the workmen and the ventilation and sanitation of mines, mills and factories. In England these regulations appear to be more minute and more rigidly enforced than in any of our American states, while in no part of western Europe is there such an utter absence of protective legislation as in some of our southern states. As in America, the sweating trade exists in London, Paris, Berlin and practically all the large towns of Europe. The difficulty of regulating home industry has been met only partially there, as in the United States, and in Europe, as in the United States, there are hundreds of thousands of men, women and children condemned to work at starvation wages under unspeakably unsanitary conditions.

Perhaps the most salient fact about labor in Europe is its ineffectiveness and the extent to which it is wasted. In almost every trade the output per worker is very much less than in the United States. The workmen do not appear to labor with the same nervous intensity as in this country. This is true of England, and stil more true of Germany, France and Belgium. There seems to be a much greater indisposition upon the part of both employers and workmen to introduce new machinery and processes and to adopt new methods of work, although in Germany there is an ever-growing improvement in this direction. A much larger proportion of the labor of the people, moreover, seems to be devoted to the production of luxuries, or of articles intended for the exclusive use of the rich. In no country of Europe does the consumption of the working man play so large a role in the demand for goods, and nowhere do workmen produce for their own class to the same extent as in the United States. For this reason the union label, which is so important a factor in American industry, is practically non-existent in England and on the continent.

Another great point of difference between Europe and the United States is the fact that in the latter country the labor population is constantly changing, whereas in Europe it is largely stationary. In America one nationality after another is supplanted by races which have immigrated more recently, and the great problem of the American working man at the present time is to raise the standard of living of the newcomers to the level of the men already employed. In Europe, on the other hand, there is relatively little immigration and the population is practically homogeneous. Moreover, the European working man does not move so readily from place to place, but is far more fixed and immobile. The result is that in Europe, and especially on the continent, the wages of labor are to a much less extent regulated by unrestricted competition, and in a large measure are determined by custom and tradition. In Europe, also, the professional strike-breaker who may be moved from place to place and put at any job is almost non-existent.

It is no mitigation of the real hardships of American workingmen that the conditions in this country are not so bad as they are in Europe, and the American workingmen should, as heretofore, strive to secure further improvement in conditions and more fortunate lives for the whole working class.

GOOD STORIES WELL TOLD.

Charles W. Price, editor of the Electrical Review, returned last week from a fishing expedition to the Thousand isles. While silent regarding his piscatorial luck, he brought with him a timely political story that he believes spellbinders could digest with profit. It was at the Lotos club that he told of meeting in the cafe of Clayton inn two loquacious and argumentive Hibernians, who between them were settling affairs of state off hand. Finally one of them, hammering the table with a heavy fist, impressively said:

"After all is said and done, the g-r-e-a-t masses of the people must constitute the bulk of the population."

His fellow debator, after a moment's pause to properly consider this weighty pronouncement, with a manner still more impressive, replied:

"Thrue for you, unless they are put into a hopeless minority by the ov-w-h-el-m-i-n-g numbers of the privileged few."—Philadelphia Ledger.

A Kentucky colonel, who, in every other way, showed his enjoyment of his Bourbon, always shut his eyes as he lifted his glass to his lips. As this is the way children are usually advised to take unsavory medicine, his friends wondered that the colonel should show such an aversion to looking at the beverage that all the rest of Kentucky likes to gaze on only less than to taste. Some one asked him at last why he always shut his eyes. He replied: "Ah'm afraid if Ah looked at it mah mouth would watah and dilute my liquah."—New York Tribune.

The late Senator Alexander T. Goodwin of Utica, N. Y., left behind him the reputation of never having been too tired nor too ill to give or take a joke. During his last illness a relative, knowing the senator's extreme fondness for brandied peaches, sent to his sickroom a small jar of that most delicious preserve. A few days later the relative called and was admitted to the sickroom. Quickly turning on his pillow, and without giving his caller time to extend the usual formalities, the sick man exclaimed:

"My dear Louise, how can I ever thank you for those delicious brandied peaches?"

"I thought you would appreciate them, Alexander," returned the caller, modestly.

"Ah, yes, ah yes," he assented with a smile, and, as the smile broadened and finally broke into a chuckle which seemed almost noisy in the hush of the sickroom, he added, "and how much more I appreciate the spirit in which they were sent."—Puck.

Just Wanted a Ticket.

An aged colored woman called at one of the seliers' windows at the Portland Union station recently, according to the Kennebec Journal, and said:

"Ah want a ticket."

"Where to?" came the question.

"Never you mind where, honey; Ah just want a ticket, that's all—you white people am too curious about cullud folks an' our business, anyhow."

After some time she was persuaded to tell where she wanted to go and was waited upon to her satisfaction.

Real Trimming.

(Chicago News.)

The Chicago man was about to start for St. Louis.

"I'd like to get myself in trim," he remarked; "I want to take in the Fike."

"Oh, you don't have to get yourself in trim," replied the St. Louis man; "you'll get trimmed enough when you get there."